

Book Review

Leisha DeHart-Davis

Creating Effective Rules in Public Sector Organizations

Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018

Reviewed by Howard A. Doughty

I shall begin rather deep on the down-side, in a melancholy mood — as befits a depressingly overcast, harshly windy, and bone-chillingly cold late-autumn afternoon. If nothing else, such temporary despondency may heighten the pleasure of the necessarily cautious optimism that follows ... or so I choose to think. Those preferring to avoid the meandering prologue may wish to proceed immediately to page 8 for my direct comments on DeHart-Davis.

The Malaise of An Earlier Time

Forty years ago, US President Jimmy Carter (1979) delivered the speech that would define his presidency. Despite the fact that it did not actually contain the word, it became implanted in popular memory as the “malaise” speech.

What Carter *did* discuss at length was a “crisis of confidence” in the United States that, in his opinion, had become a genuine “threat to democracy.” He was especially concerned with the spiritual state of his compatriots and with what he seems genuinely to have believed was “a growing sense of doubt about the meaning of our own lives.” This anxiety was unsettling the acknowledged “leader of the free world.” It was especially discomfiting in a country that was regarded by friends and foes alike as having an “exceptional” sense of superiority and a belief that it was not only economically and militarily dominant, but also the political and moral guide to the good society and the good life. The United States of America advertised itself as the embodiment of progress — the core faith of modernity.

It is a crisis in confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation.

– Jimmy Carter, July 15, 1979

Despite its then-recent defeat in South-East Asia, the USA was quite obviously the centre of a vast technological empire and, after the implosion of the USSR in 1989, it would become the world’s only remaining “superpower.” So, Carter’s speech had a dramatic impact that ultimately sealed his fate as a one-term president. It provided Ronald Reagan an opening to proclaim that the United States was, in language borrowed from the autocratic Puritan leader John Winthrop, a “shining city on a hill,” to which all humanity — if properly instructed and

guided — turned and sought to emulate (Bremer, 2005; Kiewe and Houck, 1991; Reagan, 1989). That was not the purpose of Carter’s speech, but it was certainly its consequence.

It is true that the USA was in some trouble. The American intervention in Vietnam had ended in an ignominious withdrawal. The resignation of President Nixon had undermined confidence in the presidency. The energy crisis that followed Iranian Revolution, high rates of unemployment and currency inflation, frustration among disaffected youth and working-class whites, rising demands by feminists, and enduring African-American dissatisfaction combined to raise serious questions about continuing American prosperity and social improvement.

In response to these omens, Carter had abruptly cancelled his 4th of July speech and the celebratory fireworks display planned for the National Mall. Instead, he retreated to Camp David and worked on a new address designed to confront the erosion of self-assurance that he felt was corroding his country.

I have decided to change my lifestyle, and my calendar. I have one-and-a-half years left as president, and I don’t deserve to be re-elected if I can’t do a better job. I intend to run for office and I intend to be re-elected.

– Jimmy Carter, 1979

Carter delivered the speech almost two weeks later. It spoke to themes that were easily recognizable to anyone familiar with his deeply sincere Christian faith. He spoke about the crass materialism of his compatriots: “Too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption.” He observed that “human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns.” He criticized Americans for their political indifference, saying that “two-thirds of our people do not even vote.” He noted that Americans were “fragmented” and consumed by “self-interest.” He spoke fretfully of the “growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media, and other institutions.”

If delivered by a critical sociologist, a passionate social reformer, or any other chronic malcontent, Carter’s remarks might have passed unnoticed. He was, however, the President of the United States. Such talk from the holder of the highest office in the land was extraordinarily unsettling. His speech, he candidly acknowledged at the time, was “not a message of happiness or reassurance, but it is the truth and it is a warning.”

After the speech, Carter’s popularity briefly spiked, but soon the trend was reversed and never recovered. Although initially applauded for *speaking* the “truth” to the American people, he, perhaps unexpectedly, followed his sermon by *acting* on his stated principles. He fired half his cabinet and a number of his White House staff. He swore that he would make personal changes and that he would help lead a transformation in American values. Americans, it seemed, were not impressed. His spiritual plea was followed by the landslide election of Ronald W. Reagan in 1980.

Reagan smiled and promised happier times. He reassured and reinvigorated the electorate. As the chief television salesman for the giant General Electric Company from 1954 to 1961, he had relentlessly presented the message that, “at General Electric, progress is our most

important product.” In 1980, he grasped the opportunity to make that commercial slogan a national reality. He proclaimed: “I find no national malaise. I find nothing wrong with the American people” (McDuffee, 2017).

The American people agreed. Carter was humiliated and unceremoniously returned to his peanut farm in Georgia. Reagan (helped along by the Iranian hostage crisis, which was magically resolved at the very moment the new president had taken his oath of office and was giving his inaugural address) had achieved almost as massive a victory in America’s surviving “peculiar institution,” the Electoral College (489-49), as Nixon had won over George McGovern in 1972 (520-17) or as he would win in his re-election landslide over Walter Mondale in 1984 (525-13). It was plain that the voters could not handle Carter’s “truth.”

Today, the venom and vitriol flowing from the White House in the form of “tweets” lashing out at friends and foes alike make Carter’s remarks seem less discomfiting and, in fact, rather mild. Unlike the current president, with his apparent indifference — and occasional hostility — to the *Constitution of the United States*, his contemptuous dismissal of rivals, his vicious personal attacks on those who question his self-assessment as a “stable genius,” and his fact-checked and recorded 10,000 lies both to voters and to foreign leaders, Carter had spoken earnestly about serious issues. In 2019, however, it is hard to retain historical perspective. It is difficult to avoid being swept up in the reckless hyperbole and inflammatory rhetoric that currently passes for political discourse. We must, however, try.

The Malaise Brought Up to Date

One of the disadvantages of living in contemporary North America is the difficulty of escaping the “all-Trump-all-the-time” coverage of the current American president by cable news networks, late-night talk-show monologues, newspaper columns, editorial cartoons, ubiquitous and invasive “social media” trolls, and disconcerting philosophical debates in local barber shops and hair dressers. The unrelenting presence of the forty-fifth American president has become either an almost unavoidable and hideously distorting carnival mirror or a horrifically deforming “lens” through which politics, governance, and a great deal of popular culture must be viewed. So, unless somehow distracted by alternative compulsions, obsessions, and addictions, much of what passes for real life is necessarily twisted by this truly unique political aberration.

How much happier the man is who believes his native town to be his world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.

– Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*, 1818)

Among the many disturbing trends with which America’s Commander-in-Chief is associated and for which he is often held at least partly culpable is the degradation of the basic norms of public administration. No matter how much distrust of government there may have been in previous years and decades, it certainly seems that the USA is experiencing, with or without the anticipated melodrama of a presidential impeachment, as intense and insidious a “legitimation crisis” (Habermas, 1975; PEW, 2017; PEW, 2018) today as at any other moment in living memory — including the assassination of President Kennedy, the resignation of President

Nixon and the comparatively farcical trial of President Clinton. Abnormality seems to be the “new normal.” Simple virtues such as honesty, integrity, inclusivity and compassion are ridiculed as the weaknesses of “losers.” Not immorality, but amorality is increasingly seen as admirable. Worse, the pattern of resentment and vilification of others can be contagious.

The contemporary state of “permanent crisis” not only affects relationships between citizens and government, but also pervades personal and social life. It can be seen elsewhere in the lead-up to the chaotic and potentially catastrophic “Brexit” in the United Kingdom and in the ongoing humanitarian calamity along the “beautiful” (if still imaginary) American-Mexican border wall. It is, however, also evident in the chronic disengagement in local politics and community affairs, dissatisfaction with friendships and marriages, experiences of individual isolation, growing suicide rates among the disenfranchised and dispossessed (see especially Epstein, 2019), social media addiction, as well as problems with licit and illicit substance abuse including the much-publicized opioid epidemic that took a record 70,000 American lives in 2017 and is continuing to increase at startling rates (NIH, 2019).

<p>In the United States, there are two imaginary political parties: the Republicans and the Democrats. There are also two real political parties: the Winners and the Losers. And, since both imaginary parties are controlled by the Winners, in every election this much is certain: the Winners will win.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">– Kurt Vonnegut, 1972.</p>

Such matters hearken back to Carter’s concern with “malaise.” They arise from frustration with precarious employment, fear of unemployment, and with the apparent scourge of anxiety, stress, depression, and assorted mental disorders that have emerged even (or especially) on the once-privileged idyll of college campuses. Drawing empirical correlations among these problems and attempting to discern demonstrable causal relationships among them promises to provide work for more psychologists and sociologists than are likely to take up the challenge (or win the research funding necessary to carry it out). Nonetheless, the patterns are more than suggestive and the reluctance on the part of most authorities to explore them is plain. After all, finding sensible diagnoses for social and political pathologies might just focus attention on the possibility of radical therapies that could unsettle and unseat the dominant powers in society — and that would never do. (If the American Republican Party has a small “anyone-but-Trump” faction, the American Democratic Party has a huge “anyone-but-Sanders [even Warren]” bloc.)

Applications to the Public Sector

The previous litany of individual agonies and personal sorrows, social dangers and democratic degradations should be important to readers of *The Innovation Journal* as human beings with at least an average amount of empathy for people with tribulations at home and abroad. It should be especially important in our roles as citizens with, one may hope, a primordial commitment to the elements of democracy and good governance. And, it should be particularly significant when it becomes apparent that it corrodes the basic principles of a modern, merit-based public administration — itself an occasionally contentious notion (Mark, 2019), but one that is certainly better, or at least more rational, than traditional hierarchies rooted

in various sorts of structural inequalities such as caste and class structures, as well as common nepotism or the simple but effective organizational principles of a criminal cabal.

At least since the British civil service and military reforms of the 1850s reduced corruption in the civil service, an unanticipated but beneficial consequence of the debacle of the Crimean War (O'Toole, 2006), it has been understood that norms of political neutrality, professional expertise, and rule-based decision making are exposed to corrosion and corruption when elected governments obstruct, through malice or neglect, the work of the professional public service. One of many examples can be found in the failure of elected authorities even to appoint organizational leaders in crucial positions and when whole departments of government are thereby left unable to function (McManus, 2018; Miles and Gramer, 2018; Phillip, Raju and Kessler, 2019), arguably because their work would undermine the ideological priorities of their political masters. A notable example is the current American president's failure to name a full complement of members to his Science Advisory Panel, an important government council that has yet to meet with only one year left in the incumbent's term in office — not a strategy likely to enhance morale in pertinent government departments and agencies (Mervis, 2019).

Public sector norms are further placed at risk when ideological constraints are put upon public servants whose ability to do their assigned tasks is inhibited or their work is actively suppressed. One of the most egregious examples of political interference was, of course, the exclusion of Darwinian/Mendelian principles and their replacement by a bizarre version of Lamarck's theories by Trofim Lysenko (Kean, 2017; Lysenko, 1948). Darwinism, with its apparent preference for competitions in which only the "fittest" survive — itself a distortion of Darwin attributed mainly to Herbert Spencer — was denounced as inherently "capitalistic" and denounced by Stalin and his top agronomist with the result that many hundreds of scientists were executed or exiled to labour camps if they dissented from his "Marxist-Leninist" application of Lamarck's theory of the heritability of acquired characteristics. Lysenko's failed policies also contributed to the deaths of approximately 30 million people in Ukraine. To date, nothing of such magnitude has been experienced elsewhere, but the suppression of research into climate change and other scientific matters in both the United States and Canada should give us pause (Davenport and Lander, 2019; Learn, 2017; Milman, 2019; Waters, 2019).

A major fault is the fact that Darwin introduced into his theory of evolution reactionary Malthusian ideas. – Trofim Lysenko, 1948
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Certain politicians' disdain for the public sector may wittingly or unwittingly undermine the effectiveness of the same bureaucracies that those politicians criticized prior to assuming office (Davidson, 2018). The rhetoric of the "deep state" thus leads to the *weak state* as the professional public service not only loses legitimacy with the people it is designated to serve, but also suffers a loss of self-confidence, organizational impotence, and alienation from its public purpose. So, for example, when anti-science ideologues undermine crucial research in such sensitive fields as ecology, health, and education, and when they encourage the political repression of the very expertise that governments have traditionally relied upon to make thoughtful, evidence-based decisions, the effects on policy deliberations and policy implementation can be devastating (Jeffrey, 2015; McManus, 2018; Owens, 2018; Reed, 2019; Sheth and Gould, 2017; Vallianatos, 2016). The frequency of partisan political interference in

everything from the analysis of climate change and research into renewable energy sources to pilot projects in guaranteed annual incomes and prison reform are too plentiful to enumerate.

Recently, the ongoing tragicomic melodrama taking place in the United States that is now being scrutinized by well-publicized investigations into attempts to “politicize” prosecutorial decision making, to engage in the obstruction of justice, to interfere with an independent judiciary, to manipulate law enforcement, and to take steps toward the creation of basic elements of a police state even in some of the world’s longest-standing, most stable, and most strategically important liberal democracies has made it essential to examine our procedures and practices in the public interest (Applebaum, 2019; Patriquin, 2019; Silva, 2018; Sommer, 2019). The time is plainly at hand for a comprehensive evaluation of the political process and for renewed attention to *restorative* innovations designed to improve respect for and the efficacy of public institutions. Sometimes it is important to “reinvent the wheel,” if only metaphorically, when the wagon seems in danger of running off the rails. Sometimes that can involve no more (but no less) than reaffirming the value and the values of public services in response to calls for incessant budget cuts and the proliferation of consultants and fiscal wizards charging enormous prices for shiny objects and “efficiencies” among the tone-setters of political campaigns.

Thinking about Making Rules

Attacking “red tape” is a certified vote-getter and a useful trope to attract campaign funds from *private* financial, commercial, industrial, technological, medical, communications and resource-based corporations whose primary interests are in increasing profitability and growing market share. Rules created in the *public* interest are deeply resented and highly contested by the private, for-profit sector that must occasionally curtail its most predatory practices in order to conform to the expressed needs of the commonwealth through its elected representatives in democratic governments. In language seldom used in the current political economy, however, there are systemic “internal contradictions” or, more commonly, “conflicts of interest” in decision-making arrangements that allow self-interested entities to be involved in authoritative determinations of the policies and rules that will define their future regulatory circumstances.

If you’re not paranoid, you’re not paying attention. – American colloquialism

Foxes do not normally make good guardians of chicken coops. Yet, the influence of businesses over citizens remains in terms of governments providing special favours to “too big to fail” corporations that receive vast public sector procurement contracts, generous cash incentives, tax exemptions, financial bail-outs when requested, and even special agreements to avoid criminal prosecutions when claims can be made that the kind of punishment regularly meted out to small businesses and ordinary citizens can be avoided by judicial devices such as “deferred prosecution agreements” that allow companies to pay fines (the “cost of doing business”) and promising to do better in the future instead of facing criminal charges and genuinely devastating penalties. Although the attempt to turn the SNC-Lavalin “scandal” into a crucial issue in the recent Canadian election fizzled, it is just one of many cases which point to the question of what is proper and what is improper conduct in private-public sector arrangements (Edmond, 2019; Goodwin, 2019); in time these and ever more complicated issues

will have to be confronted as the spectre of information technology becomes an even more monstrous matter.

Compared to much larger problems, the SNC-Lavalin question is absolutely petty. Individual citizens, banks, businesses, governments, and institutions of all kinds are in danger of having personal privacy, public policy, and the control of all aspects of socio-economic interaction overwhelmed by massive technological changes. So, the need for innovative responses to overpowering corporate control — now largely in the hands of a few mega-corporations (notably Amazon, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft) — has never been greater.

There is a Chinese curse which says: 'May you live in interesting times.' Like it or not we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also more open to the creative energy of men than any other time in history.
– Robert F. Kennedy, 1966

The fact that public sector institutions are falling behind even the possibility of effectively regulating these culture-defining giants in the public interest adds urgency to the situation. Their potentially totalitarian magnitude in information collection and dissemination, commerce and finance, and technologically mediated relations of every conceivable sort demands that this become one of our main public policy concerns. As *New York Times* journalist Kevin Roose commented following an appearance by Mark Zuckerberg before the US Senate committee inquiring into the efforts of Cambridge Analytica to interfere with the US election of 2016: “These senators are part of a legislative body that makes the laws for a population of three hundred and some million. Mark Zuckerberg, by himself, controls a sort of supranational entity that’s 2.2 billion people... He can’t launch nuclear weapons or start a war or collect taxes but he can shape the behaviors and the mental states and the information diets of many, many more people around the world” (Hendrickson, 2018). As for Roose’s assessment, he might be a trifle optimistic. After all, in an important milestone in the history of propaganda, William Randolph Hearst is credited/blamed for starting the Spanish-American War in 1898 and all he had was a New York newspaper!

The reassurance of reasonable rules

We are now in an era when Russian hackers, Chinese trackers, and domestic big data collectors merge with our own complicity in the extermination of privacy through our obsessive and increasingly coerced use of suspiciously anti-social “social media,” unlimited cashless and carefully monitored financial transactions, and the ever-present virtual eyes and ears of the surveillance society. Cybernetic surveillance systems are poised to monitor almost everything we think, say and do, and to report back to disembodied authorities that are potentially empowered to reward and punish personal behaviour in an immense “social credit” system (Botsman, 2017; Horsley, 2018; Kobie, 2019; Song, 2018). Global positioning systems do not just help find lost children or provide instructions about the most efficient directions to the local hospital; they ensure that our location can be determined by anyone with an interest in tracing our travels.

From Microsoft, Google and Facebook to Amazon and from commercial banks to tax collectors, we are being urged and may ultimately be compelled to conduct private and public business through multiple, interconnected technological devices that are accessible to any organization with a modestly competent information technology department. Finger prints, police officers and confidential informants are being replaced by facial recognition devices and iris-scans, and the storage of almost every aspect of our lives in “the cloud.” We are implicated in massive efforts to catch up with and then to go far beyond data manipulation, blatant propaganda, famously fake news, and the now almost quaint critique of “manufacturing consent” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002). That these technologies are already out of control and in use by individuals and institutions that are not well known for their concern with democratic governance and an ethical public service ought to be no news to anyone. That it is impossible to speak coherently of democracy at a time when the richest men in the world have net wealth in excess of \$100 billion each and close to a billion people survive on less than \$2 a day should be obvious to everyone.

With such real and imagined prospects, politicians, public servants and the people at large can be forgiven for experiencing an unhealthy measure of apprehension and disorientation. We therefore feel the need for assurance that somehow we — as well as some remnants of our democracies, however “fixed” or however flawed — will survive in a recognizable form. Such consolation may be found in the musings of people who see beyond the drama of perpetual turmoil, feel confident in the belief that “this too shall pass,” and trust that reasonable and respectful rules will re-emerge and once again give coherence and the appearance of civility to our lives.

DeHart-Davis’ Contribution

Leisha DeHart-Davis carries on in the hopeful Weberian tradition of humanistic rationalism, empiricism and cautious, pragmatic liberalism. She offers us an excellent example of what happens when an established academic with a professional interest in public administration thinks seriously about rules and shares her thoughts with us. As description, analysis, normative assessment, and an invitation to apply her ideas to questions of public sector innovation, *Creating Effective Rules in Public Sector Organizations* succeeds rather well.

Despite the indispensability of organizational rules to public management, most practical and scholarly literature tends to focus on the negative effects of rules [and to] assume that rules make for sluggish bureaucracies, stifle employee creativity, foster inefficiency, breed rigid bureaucratic behavior, and dim hopes for organizational effectiveness. — Leisha DeHart-Davis
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DeHart-Davis has been at it for some time. By “it” I mean the investigation, promotion and ultimately the redemption of healthy public sector organizations. It is a project that she has associated with the transition from “red tape” to “green tape.” In dozens of professional journal articles, panels and workshops, she has worked somewhat against the neoliberal tide with its dedication to “new public management,” “business-like” procedures, hierarchical authority structures, the incessant calls for “efficiencies,” and the ideological insistence that downsizing

government is an important element in liberating the allegedly superior mechanisms of production and distribution of goods and services deployed by the private sector.

Efficiencies, alas, normally amount to cost-cutting measures that undermine effectiveness, particularly where fiscal accountability and quantitative performance measures obscure the betrayal of core mandates in favour of financial restraints. In the end, shaving pennies off budgets can result not merely in false economies that impose greater “downstream” costs in everything from health care and education to the criminal justice and corrections systems. And, what’s more, not only do downsizing, outsourcing and imposing rigorous performance indicators reduce effectiveness, but they also harm efficacy and equity both in the services rendered and the quality of working life for those who render them.

DeHart-Davis understands that rules are essential to the proper functioning of complex organizations and not encumbrances to so-called efficiency. She outlines how rules are essential to public sector organizations. They are essential tools for achieving mandated results. They structure management-employee relations in the pursuit of organizational goals. They provide a predictable context in which employer-employee relations can be handled effectively.

Despite the stereotype of rigid, unresponsive bureaucracy, in public organizations rules are critical for achieving efficient and effective workplaces ... now more than ever. – Leisha DeHart-Davis

Creating Effective Rules in Public Sector Organizations is not, however, an “idiot’s guide” to effective leadership. Quite the contrary, DeHart-Davis acknowledges the inevitability of intra-organizational conflict and presents a very useful case study of employee grievance policies in a non-unionized North Carolina local government. Conducted in 2014 and funded by the Local Government Research Collaborative, it shows how quasi-judicial mechanisms can function not to promote discord and tension, but to relieve it by empowering employees, constraining overzealous authority and providing each side with the basis of a mutually respectful and legitimate method of resolution for disagreement in what would otherwise be an inherently adversarial relationship.

DeHart-Davis is acutely aware of the public stereotype of “rigid, unresponsive bureaucracy,” yet demonstrates how effective rules are critical if efficient, effective public organizations are to succeed. She brings forward a conceptual distinction between what she calls “red tape” and “green tape” theories. On the one hand, “red tape” encapsulates all the dysfunctional, time-consuming, unnecessary and frustrating processes that constitute the negative image of public sector work environments as perceived by politicians, taxpayers, competing interest groups, and ideological opponents of public sector institutions regardless of the vital roles they play. They may also involve imported managerial practices based on any number of fashionable (and often short-lived) trends in organizational rhetoric that caters to anything from human relations commitments to “team building” to the current fads about accountability metrics anticipated by the somewhat cantankerous Pitirim Sorokin (1956; Paquet, 2009) over sixty years ago and now hyperlinked (so to speak) to wholly new playgrounds of statistical methodologies and sites of deep data mining, processing and analysis.

“Green tape” is another matter. It involves written rules, to be sure, but their origin, articulation and application are not matters of top-down implementation of external practices (“best” or otherwise). Most often, they are little more than the development of problem-solving methods arising from within organizations and based on the collective experience and professional expertise of the workers themselves using, in one noted case, “employee-driven policy design.” Simply put, “green tape” relates to the creation of effective rules developed with the following procedural requirements:

1. formalized rules that show employees exactly what is expected of them (written rules);
2. rules that make sense and can resolve problems at hand (valid means-ends relationships);
3. consistent application among all employees
4. a proper balance between employee discretion and management (optimal employee control);
5. full understanding of why a rule is in place and why it must be followed (purposes understood by stakeholders).

The elegant simplicity of this little inventory, combined with the understanding that rule making works best when it creatively involves the people who will be expected to live by those rules, should be what is called a “no brainer.” Its benefits for government agencies and organizations should be obvious. The impact of improvement in public sector performance should be plain. And, the potential of such improvements on citizen perceptions of public sector institutions should be clear as “positive feedback” works its way through the system.

Defined as good rules that people will follow, green tape is most likely to arise from rules that are written, logical, consistently applied, optimally controlling, and understood. – Leisha DeHart-Davis

To attain a “golden mean” between the failure to achieve objectives in situations of “under-control” and the stultifying environment of “over-control” in which micro-management asks employees to “check their brains at the door,” DeHart-Davis outlines the conditions for what she calls “optimal control” or green tape. She does not, however, leave the matter at the level of theory. *Creating Effective Rules in Public Sector Organizations* is chock-full of examples that illustrate how public sector institutions that must balance the demands of politicians, senior bureaucrats, internal management-labour relations, public opinion leaders, private sector ideologues and, of course, the public both as taxpayers and as people to receive services on the one hand and be regulated on the other can survive and thrive. More than almost all the “how-to” handbooks for organizational administration (never mind the often ponderous “case studies” that offer an overabundance of details leading to predictable banalities) that I have read over the past half-century, her examples are genuinely revealing and actually helpful.

The book concludes with a chapter of practical suggestions to begin rule-building within organizations. The goal, of course, is not to make matters worse by further complicating already complex organizational procedures. Her approach to public sector management begins with the assumption that better bureaucratic procedures can achieve two related goals: the objective improvement of public service and the subjective improvement of employee morale. (DeHart-

Davis, Davis and Mohr, 2015). Those are noble goals and aims which, if achieved, will do much to calm the uncivil beasts currently dominating political discussion, sounding alarms in our various polities, and seemingly intent on dissolving central practices not so, as W. B. Yeats (1920) famously warned, “mere anarchy,” but something spectacularly worse — maybe a version of the “inverted totalitarianism” described by Sheldon Wolin (2017) — “will be loosed upon the land” and, in the absence of good will, ultimately prevail.

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